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How Do Active Duty Women Perceive the Army's Equal Opportunity Climate?

by

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ABSTRACT

Equal opportunity is recognized by the Department of Defense (DoD) as being crucial to maintaining a high state of military readiness. In the last two and a half decades, a number of equal opportunity initiatives have been employed by the DoD and each of the military Services in an effort to promote fair treatment of minorities and women. Social science literature suggests that the integration of racial minorities, particularly black males, is a military success story (Moskos, 1990). Some social scientists argue convincingly that the military has far surpassed civilian organizations in integrating African Americans (Moskos & Butler, 1996; Moskos, 1993).

While the U.S. military has had a long history of addressing racial issues, problems concerning gender have only recently been addressed on a large scale. Some scholars assert that the military is the last male bastion in the United States, and it lags behind the civilian sector in integrating women (Burke, 1996; Becraft, 1992).

This study examines the perceptions of active duty men and women in the U.S. Army to determine whether or not minority men are more satisfied with the equal opportunity climate than women and whether or not minority women are less satisfied with the equal opportunity climate than non-minority (white) women. Although the focus of this study is on active-duty women in the Army, active-duty men have been entered into the statistical analysis for comparison. Degree of satisfaction is measured by responses to items on the Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS). The data were stratified by rank level (officer and enlisted), and a General Linear Model was estimated with race, gender, and the intersection of race and gender as independent variables. Results indicate race is a more powerful predictor of the attitudes of active-duty men and women toward the equal opportunity climate in the military than gender. While gender and the interaction of gender and race are significant in most of the statistical models in this study, they explain less than one percent of the variance. Although African-American men are more satisfied with the equal opportunity climate than African-American women, they are less satisfied than both white women and, in some cases, Hispanic women.